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# SEPTEMBER

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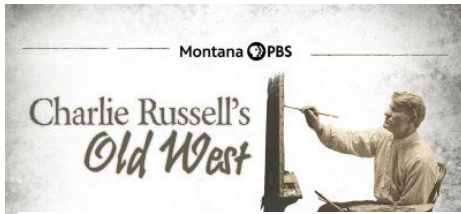
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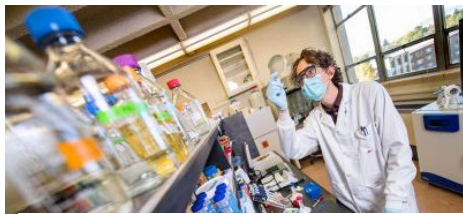
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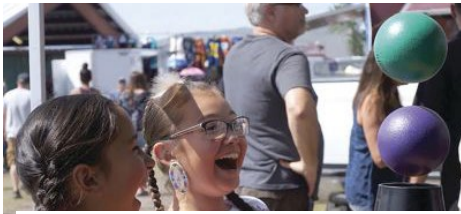
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UM / News / UM Studies How Climate Change Could Undermine Biodiversity Conservation Goals

COLLEGE OF FORESTRY AND CONSERVATION

# UM STUDIES HOW CLIMATE CHANGE COULD UNDERMINE BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION GOALS

30 SEPTEMBER 2021

*UM research suggests climate change could complicate a plan to conserve 30% of the Earth by 2030.*

**MISSOULA** – In a **new study published in the journal *Communications, Earth & Environment***, University of Montana researchers and colleagues explore how climate change could challenge efforts to protect biodiversity within the network of protected areas around the globe.

The team examined how potential shifts in ecoregions and biomes caused by climate change might change their representation within the global protected area network. They also considered the implications for conservation targets that call for 30% of Earth's habitats to be formally protected by 2030.

"At its most basic level, this study attempts to understand what shifts in the distribution of the Earth's ecoregions and biomes will mean for the capacity to conserve and protect biological diversity using protected areas," said Solomon Dobrowski, the paper's lead author and a professor of forest landscape ecology in the University's W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation.

Scientists have divided Earth's terrestrial areas into roughly 800 ecoregions. An ecoregion is an ecosystem defined by distinctive geography and biota. These combinations of plants and animals act as surrogates for the planet's biodiversity and provide a means for scientists, international organizations and countries to track whether protected areas represent the planet's biodiversity.

Countries around the world use protected-area designations to conserve biodiversity. Protected areas come in lots of flavors, Dobrowski said, like national parks in the U.S. But one thing they all have in common are fixed boundaries that delineate a place on the ground.

Climate change will likely affect what ecosystems are represented in protected areas, Dobrowski and his co-authors contend in the new study, but how remains unclear. It's also unclear how that could affect the effectiveness of conservation strategies that rely on protected areas – like the United Nations's draft of the Post-2020 Global Diversity Framework, better known as 30 by 30, which calls for permanently protecting 30% of the Earth by 2030 through expanding the protected area network, among other initiatives. (In the U.S., there also is the America the Beautiful initiative, which aims to conserve 30% of America's lands and waters by 2030.)

The 30 by 30 framework will be addressed at the UN Biodiversity Conference COP-15, which kicks off online in October.

“The UN, in coordination with many countries and international conservation organizations, is promoting the expansion of the protected area network so that 30% of all ecoregions are protected by 2030,” Dobrowski said. “But what happens when plants and animals, and therefore ecoregions, move over time to track their optimal climate but the protected area boundaries stay fixed in place?”

“Even if 30% of a given ecoregion may be protected now, as the ecoregions shift in response to climate change, that protection and representation within the protected area network will change,” he said.

To address these questions, the scientists used spatial climate analogs – present day locations that share similar climates to those projected for a location in the future – to examine how a 2-degree Celsius rise in global temperatures could alter the distribution of ecoregions. Then the scientists analyzed what that those changes could mean for achieving 30 by 30.

They found that roughly half of the Earth’s land area will experience climate conditions that correspond with different ecoregions.

“Climate change has the potential to dramatically shift the ecosystems of the planet,” Dobrowski said. “We project by mid-century that over 50% of ecoregions globally will have a climate associated with a totally different ecoregion. We look at the world around us, and we see ecosystems that we are used to seeing. We think they’re stable, but they’re not. And those kinds of changes are going to challenge our ability to conserve biodiversity globally.”

The authors recommend that efforts to protect biodiversity will need to explicitly consider how climate change will drive changes in the patterns of biodiversity.

“We’re dealing with a moving target in terms of trying to capture the planet’s biodiversity in protected areas,” said co-author Caitlin Littlefield, formerly a UM postdoc and now with Conservation Science Partners. “In this work, we provide a model for how people can anticipate dynamic and shifting patterns of biodiversity and respond with strategic conservation investments.”

To extend their results more broadly, the group also created an online tool, Analog Atlas

(<https://plus2c.org/>), to inform the public of the ways climate change could alter the ecosystems where they live and play. Climate analogs contextualize climate change by asking a simple question: “Where can I find the climate of my future, today?” Dobrowski said.

Users can select any land area on the globe and see another location where the current climate matches future predicted conditions for that selected location.

“We are really excited about the Analog Atlas,” said co-author Sean Parks of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute. “It allows users to conceptualize climate change through maps, street views and statistics such as expected changes in the number of hot days, freezing nights and fire conducive days,”

UM authors on the study include Dobrowski, Drew Lyons, Clark Hollenberg and former UM-postdoctoral researcher Caitlin Littlefield, now at Conservation Science Partners. Other co-authors include Carlos Carroll from the Klamath Center for Conservation Research; Sean Parks from the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute in Missoula, John Abatzoglou and Katherine Hegewisch at the University of California, Merced, and Josh Gage from Gage Cartographics in Bozeman.

###

**Contact:** Solomon Dobrowski, UM professor of forest landscape ecology, 406-243-6068, [solomon.dobrowski@umontana.edu](mailto:solomon.dobrowski@umontana.edu).

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UM / News / Large Incoming Class, Retention Power Growing UM Enrollment



*A large incoming class and improved retention have headcount enrollment at UM up 3% this fall.*

**MISSOULA** – The University of Montana is growing again.



Powered by a 30% increase in the incoming class, as well as continued improvement in the retention rate, the flagship institution increased its total enrollment for the first time in a decade.

UM's first-year class, entire student body, graduate school and Missoula College enrollment grew in the fall 2021 census.

With overall student headcount growth of 3%, UM welcomed 10,106 students to campus this fall. UM's official first-year student headcount was 1,276, a 30% increase over last year. Enrollment at Missoula College rose 7.4% over last year to 1,243 students.

UM President Seth Bodnar said the positive enrollment trend reflects the University's revamped recruitment process and focus.

"This year marks UM's return to growth," Bodnar said. "We have rebuilt the way we recruit, retain and market our flagship university to prospective students. This first-year class is the result of that important work, and the entire UM family is eager for sustained enrollment growth in the years ahead."

Additionally, for the third year in a row, UM improved its student retention rate, now at 75.4%. This figure measures the rate at which students persist at UM to finish their degree. The rate has risen over 7% from a low of 68.5% when Bodnar started his leadership post. UM's fall 2021 retention rate is the highest in nearly a decade.

"From the first day our students step foot on campus, we are committed to their success," Bodnar said. "This rapid improvement in student retention reflects our mission to help every student find their own path and flourish. I am especially thankful to our UM faculty and staff, who dedicate themselves to this mission."

The fall 2021 semester also marks a new all-time high for graduate student enrollment at UM. The 2,637 graduate students enrolled in UM this semester represent a 2% increase over the previous record set last fall. This student growth comes on the heels of **UM's record-shattering research activity last year**, much of which is conducted by UM graduate students. UM maintains its status as the largest graduate and professional school in the state.

With the fall semester census complete, UM Vice President for Operations and Finance Paul Lasiter reported that net tuition revenues for the University are projected to be in line with

budgeted amounts.

“Compared to last fiscal year, we estimated that fiscal 2022’s total net tuition and fee revenues would increase nearly 8% as a result of enrollment growth and rate increases,” said Lasiter. “Our results for the past summer and current fall semester are in line with our total revenue projection.”

UM Associate Vice President for Enrollment Mary Kreta said UM’s enrollment future is bright.

“Given the complex challenges that universities are facing across the country with COVID-19, we are excited to welcome our largest class to campus in many years,” Kreta said. “We are already hard at work recruiting the next class of Grizzlies, and we are optimistic that our University will see continued growth in the years ahead.”

In addition to overall student growth, UM made significant enrollment progress in the following areas:

- UM welcomed 649 transfer students this fall, a 13% increase over last year.
- 3,788 students from outside Montana are enrolled in UM this semester, a 10% increase over last year.
- UM’s full-time equivalent enrollment is 8,008, a 2.5% increase over last year.

Bodnar thanked the entire UM staff, faculty and larger Missoula community for their support of the flagship.

“There are people in every corner of this University who have worked extremely hard to create positive, marked change for UM, and I am deeply pleased to share in this success with them,” Bodnar said. “Our extended alumni and business networks also deserve thanks, as well as those who continue to support our University. The success of UM is a shared responsibility, and we have much to look forward together as we enter into a new period of growth and renewal.”

**UM’s complete student enrollment census data can be found online.** More information can be found at the **University Data Office website.**

###

**Contact:** Dave Kuntz, UM director of strategic communications, 406-243-5659, [dave.kuntz@umontana.edu](mailto:dave.kuntz@umontana.edu).

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UM / News / MontanaPBS Doc Earns Prestigious Western Heritage Award



*Gus Chambers (right) and Paul Zalis accept the*

*2021 Western Heritage Award on Sept. 18 in Oklahoma City. (Credit: Hymer Photography)*

**MISSOULA** – The MontanaPBS documentary production “Charlie Russell’s Old West” received the 2021 Western Heritage Award for Documentary from the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum during a Sept. 18 black-tie event in Oklahoma City.

The museum honors the best of western literature, photography, magazine, poetry, music, film and television. The film’s director and co-producer Gus Chambers and writer/co-producer Paul Zalis were honored in the Film and Television category.

“We’re deeply honored to be receiving this recognition for our program on an iconic Western artist who is one of Montana’s most celebrated citizens,” Zalis said. “We’re thankful to the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum for applauding our story with this prestigious award.”

“**Charlie Russell’s Old West**” told the story of Montana’s cowboy artist. No one played a larger role in mythologizing the cowboy’s place in American culture than Russell. The program explores his art and life as he witnessed and documented the end of the Wild West open range as America entered the 20th Century.

Other winners in the Film and Television category include the motion picture “News of the World,” starring Tom Hanks, and “Yellowstone” starring Kevin Costner. The 2020 winner of the documentary award was Ken Burns, Dayton Duncan and Julie Dunfey for their documentary “Country Music.”



The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City is America’s premier institution of Western history, art and culture. Founded in 1955, the museum collects, preserves and exhibits an internationally renowned collection of Western art and artifacts while sponsoring dynamic educational programs to stimulate interest in the enduring legacy of the American West. For more information, visit [nationalcowboymuseum.org](http://nationalcowboymuseum.org).

MontanaPBS (KUFM-TV in Missoula, KUSM-TV in Bozeman, KUKL-TV in Kalispell, KBGS-TV in Billings, KUGF-TV in Great Falls and KUHM-TV in Helena) is a service of the University of Montana and Montana State University. For more information, visit <http://www.montanapbs.org>.

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**Photo:** Gus Chambers (right) and Paul Zalis accept the 2021 Western Heritage Award on Sept. 18 in Oklahoma City. (Credit: Hymer Photography)

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UM / News / UM Alumna Mary Olson Honored with Bucklew Service Award



*Mary Olson and her husband, Greg, who both graduated from UM and went on to successful careers, continue to fund College of Business scholarships at the University.*



*Mary Olson (left) receives the Albert Helbing Memorial Scholarship as a UM undergraduate.*



## **MISSOULA –**

Long before embarking on a 30-year career with IBM and prior to her current work with tech giant Oracle, Mary Olson was a girl growing up in **Billings** wondering how she could ever afford to attend college.

“My wonderful, supportive parents had five kids, and sending us to college wasn’t in the cards,” she said.

But she did go to college. Olson received a bachelor’s degree in business from the University of Montana in 1981, followed by an MBA, also from UM, in 1989.

She did it while working three jobs and with the help of private giving.

“My scholarship meant more than financial assistance,” Olson said of receiving the Albert Helbing Memorial Scholarship as an undergraduate. “It was an affirmation that someone believed in my success, that I was worth the investment.”

Four decades later, Mary and her husband, Greg, who earned an MBA from UM in 1989 and worked over 30 years in wealth management and banking, are dedicated to paying that support forward. They fund scholarships that assist both undergraduate and graduate College of Business students in earning their degrees and launching fulfilling careers.

Since making their first gift to UM in 1986, the Olsons' commitment has remained steadfast. First-hand experience has helped them understand UM's continued need to provide privately funded scholarships to help students enroll and stay in school to pursue their educational goals and launch promising careers.

"Our philanthropic goal is to ensure current and future students have the same opportunities we did," Olson said.

In recognition of her passion for helping students, the UM Foundation has awarded Olson the **Neil S. Bucklew Presidential Service Award**. The award, named for former UM President Bucklew who served from 1981 to 1986, recognizes individuals for their extraordinary effort to deepen Montana's understanding of UM's needs and strengths. It has been given annually by the UM Foundation since 1988.

Olson received the award on Sept. 23 at the UM Foundation's President's Club Gathering. Recent honorees of the Bucklew Award include Summerfield and Julie Baldrige in 2020, Eric Sprunk and Dennis and Gretchen Eck in 2019, Mickey Sogard in 2018 and Michael McDonough in 2017.

Like previous Bucklew Award recipients, Olson has given back to the UM community in many ways beyond financial gifts. From 2008 to 2020, she served the UM Foundation as a trustee and committee chair and led the board as chair during the quiet phase of Campaign Montana, which concluded in 2020 as the most ambitious and successful higher education fundraising campaign in state history. Olson has also served on the UM President's Advisory Board and the College of Business Advisory Council.

Olson's career launched shortly after she graduated from UM, when she helped automate the accounting function at Eastern Montana College, now MSU Billings. The experience helped her realize the potential for technology to change the way organizations operate. She worked for the state of Montana in information technology while pursuing her MBA. After graduating in 1989, she joined IBM, where she held a wide variety of positions that enabled her to work around the globe. Now with Oracle, Olson works with North American research institutions looking to innovate using the company's cloud infrastructure and with K-12 districts and universities applying cloud technologies to enhance education.

"I enjoy my work because it aligns with my desire to improve education and my belief that technology, applied properly, is at the heart of improvement," she said. "I have had an exciting

career because technology changes faster than any other discipline and demands that I keep my skills sharp and continue learning.”

When she’s guest lecturing to UM business classes and mentoring MBA students, Olson generously shares the leadership skills, business acumen and thoughtful guidance developed across her decades-long career with the world’s biggest tech companies.

“I tell students, ‘I am proud that I’ve never pursued a job I was qualified for; be willing to stretch yourself,’” she said. “I recommend approaching job opportunities as a way to gain experience, instead of waiting until they have all the necessary skills.”

She also advises students to remain flexible throughout their careers and build a mentor network.

“Mary’s extraordinary efforts on behalf of UM, the UM Foundation and the College of Business have elevated the University and student success,” said Suzanne Tilleman, Sprunk and Burnham Endowed Dean of the College of Business. “She combines knowledge from her career in the global tech industry and her passion for helping students to provide leadership and technological expertise. It is truly special that Mary serves our campus community in this way.”

Olson’s contributions extend into the broader Montana business community through service to the Montana Association for Female Executives, the Montana Council for Economic Education and the Montana Chamber Foundation.

Her ongoing dedication to UM – through philanthropic support, community service and mentorship – continues to inspire current and future Grizzlies and members of the UM family.

“My passion comes from the fact that UM really changed my life and made it so much richer and fulfilling than I had ever imagined,” she said.

To anyone hoping to make an impact, the Missoula resident advises following her approach: “Find what speaks to your heart, and let that guide your actions.”

**The UM Foundation** is an independent nonprofit organization that has inspired philanthropic support to enhance excellence and opportunity at UM since 1950.

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**Contact:** Elizabeth Willy, UM Foundation director of communications, 406-243-5320, [elizabeth.willy@supportum.org](mailto:elizabeth.willy@supportum.org).

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UM / News / Gore to Discuss Climate Change at UM Baucus Institute Series

SCHOOL OF LAW

# GORE TO DISCUSS CLIMATE CHANGE AT UM BAUCUS INSTITUTE SERIES

23 SEPTEMBER 2021

*Former U.S. Vice President Al Gore will participate in “A Climate Conversation,” a speaker series hosted by UM’s Max S. Baucus Institute.*



**MISSOULA** – Former U.S. Vice President Al Gore will participate in “[A Climate Conversation](#)” on Thursday, Oct. 28, as part of an annual speaker series hosted by the University of Montana’s Max S. Baucus Institute.

Gore will speak at 7 p.m. MST on Zoom, along with former U.S. Sen. and Ambassador Max Baucus.

“It’s exciting to have someone with the expertise of former Vice President Gore come speak to Montanans about a really important issue,” said Sam Panarella, director of the UM institute and a professor in the University’s Blewett School of Law. “He’s been on the front lines of getting the word out about climate change long before most people were talking about it in such a public way.

“I think there are very few politicians – or anybody, frankly – who have been talking about it as much or for as long or with as much passion as former Vice President Gore,” Panarella said.

The Baucus Institute’s annual speaker series brings global thought leaders in the areas of economic development, foreign policy and politics to Montana for public discussions about issues of critical importance to the future of the country. This year’s topic will be the current climate, both environmental and political. Free and open to the public, participants are invited to [register for “A Climate Conversation” online](#).

Gore was the vice president of the United States from 1993 to 2001. He is the author of the 2006 book “An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It,” which was developed into an Academy Award-winning documentary film the same year. In 2007, he was a co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

A longtime colleague and friend of Gore, Baucus was U.S. senator for Montana from 1978 to 2014 and ambassador to China from 2014 to 2017. He was a sponsor of the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments and a leader in protecting wildlands along the Rocky Mountain Front.

“As an institute, one of our main areas of focus is climate change,” Panarella said. “We have the Baucus Climate Scholars Program, which gets students on the ground working on climate change issues and solutions.

“My hope with this talk is to increase the velocity and amount of conversation around the issue

of climate change,” he said, “and perhaps introduce it to Montanans who haven’t thought very much about it or who have thought about it but are looking for more and better information. This is a good educational opportunity.”

For more information about the event, please [visit the Max S. Baucus Speaker Series website](https://www.maxsbaucus.com/) and register at <https://www.tinyurl.com/uuk3xx9e>. Learn more about the Baucus Institute at <https://www.umt.edu/law/baucus-institute/>.

###

**Contact:** Andi Armstrong, Blewett School of Law director of marketing and communications, 406-243-6509, [andrea.armstrong@umontana.edu](mailto:andrea.armstrong@umontana.edu).

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UM / News / Continued Growth Shatters UM Record for Research Activity



RESEARCH

# CONTINUED GROWTH SHATTERS UM RECORD FOR RESEARCH ACTIVITY

22 SEPTEMBER 2021

*UM earned \$138 million in research awards in fiscal year 2021, a 38% increase from the previous year.*

**MISSOULA** – There is more research happening at the University of Montana today than at

any point in the flagship institution's history.

For fiscal year 2021, which runs from July to June, UM reported \$138 million in research awards. This sizeable increase is 38% larger than the previous year's record-breaking research intake.

"UM is quickly emerging as a regional research leader," said Scott Whittenburg, UM vice president for **research and creative scholarship** and dean of the **Graduate School**. "This continued growth is driven by students, faculty and staff, who are motivated to solve some of the most pressing challenges facing society. It is exciting for our whole campus that UM remains on the path to achieve a Carnegie Research Very-High Activity, or R1 ranking."

R1 is the highest classification awarded to universities in the United States based on research activity and impact.

Whittenburg noted that since 2013 UM **ranks No. 6 nationally for research growth**, according to data from the National Science Foundation. In the past seven years, UM's research expenditure growth has more than doubled, and Whittenburg believes the surge in research activity will continue.

"The proposed volume of research funding requests UM made last year was \$285 million, which also was a record for our university," Whittenburg said. "This institution is in a strong position to continue this upward research trajectory, and that is in large part due to our top-ranked faculty and record graduate student enrollment."

The research awards from the prior year are an excellent indicator of the research expenditures this year. The Office of Sponsored Programs at UM is currently determining the research expenditures that will be reported to the Commissioner's Office in November, and will appear in the National Science Foundation's Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) survey later in the year. The HERD survey is the national metric used to measure research activity and is used in determining the Carnegie Research Classification of universities.

Research investments made at UM come in a variety of forms, including research grants from federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, NASA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as well as private sector contracts. Research efforts at UM reflect the wide array of disciplines housed across the campus, including health sciences,

biological and biomedical sciences, natural resources, conservation, psychology, geosciences, social sciences and computer sciences and engineering.

On-campus research at UM also has helped spur private business spinoffs, which are located in Missoula and employ dozens of researchers at high-paying salaries. Some of the UM-affiliated business spinoffs include FYR Diagnostics and Inimmune Corp.

###

**Contact:** Scott Whittenburg, UM vice president for research and creative scholarship, 406-243-6670, [scott.whittenburg@umontana.edu](mailto:scott.whittenburg@umontana.edu).

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UM / News / Four UM Students Named Homecoming Ambassadors



*UM's new Homecoming ambassadors are (left to right) Lane Arthur, Siena Cysewski, Shelby Fisher and Isabelle Melton.*

**MISSOULA** – Four outstanding students brimming with Griz spirit recently were named

## University of Montana Homecoming ambassadors.

**Homecoming 2021** features exciting events all week, culminating with the Griz football game Saturday, Sept. 25, in Washington-Grizzly Stadium. The theme this year is “Heart of the Grizzly.”

The Griz-hearted student ambassadors are Lane Arthur of **Custer, South Dakota**; Siena Cysewski of **Kirkland, Washington**; Shelby Fisher of **Ronan**; and Isabelle Melton of **Helena**.

Years ago, the ambassadors replaced traditional Homecoming royalty at UM. They are selected by the UM Alumni Association and will be recognized at the Homecoming football game and represent UM at 2021-22 alumni events. The ambassadors were selected based on their enthusiasm and engagement with campus, as well as their academic standing and having completed at least three academic semesters.

What does the Homecoming theme mean to this year’s ambassadors?

“We care about our fellow peers, we are inclusive, we seek the success of our community and so much more,” said Arthur, who majors in wildlife biology and parks, tourism and recreation management. “The ‘heart of the grizzly’ shows just how much of a compassionate and caring campus we are and how much we strive to bring out the best in others.”

“It’s no secret what we have all been through for the past year and a half, and (the theme) speaks to the immense resilience, perseverance and spirit that we all unwaveringly possess,” said Cysewski, who majors in theater and business administration. “A grizzly bear, by nature, is strength, power, full of determination and intensity, and that nature is mirrored in UM students. We possess the determination and resilience to push through a crippling world event and still turn up ready to learn and support one another.”

How will the ambassadors represent the heart of a grizzly?

“I am proud to be a resilient, community-oriented student at the University of Montana,” said Fisher, who majors in history and political science. “Not all paths to success are smooth, but with the right community and courage, you can always reach your goals. I hope to instill in my community these values, especially through this difficult time. I hope to inspire others to continue their fight, as I have chosen to do.”

“Upon arriving in Missoula, one of the first things I did was open a branch of my nonprofit organization, Montana Soccer Soles, a program which provides soccer gear to children in need,” said Melton, who studies political science and multidisciplinary studies as a Davidson Honors College Scholar. “I am committed to saying ‘yes’ to as many experiences as possible, including playing intramural soccer, pledging a sorority, singing with the Zootown Cabaret and joining Mortar Board. Having the Heart of a Grizzly means having the courage to try new things, the confidence to help others succeed and the strength to do the right thing even when it is hard. I work hard, seek to empower others and display the courage to be different. UM has fortified in me a dedication to growth, selflessness and giving back.”

Among the remaining UM Homecoming events taking place this week are:

- The Distinguished Alumni Award Ceremony and panel discussion, which begin at 5:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 24, in the University Center Ballroom.
- The Yell Night Pep Rally, which starts at 8 p.m. Friday, Sept. 24, on the UM Oval. It will feature the UM Marching Band, Singing on the Steps, the lighting of the M and fireworks.
- The Homecoming football game at 1 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 25, in Washington-Grizzly Stadium. The Griz are taking on the Cal Poly Mustangs.

###

**Contact:** LeAnn Meyer, UM Alumni Association director, 406-243-5258,  
[leann.meyer@mso.umt.edu](mailto:leann.meyer@mso.umt.edu).

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UM / News / UM Experts Study Vaccine Hesitancy in Montana

COLLEGE OF HEALTH

# UM EXPERTS STUDY VACCINE HESITANCY IN MONTANA

17 SEPTEMBER 2021

*Sophia Newcomer, UM assistant professor of epidemiology, is the principal investigator on a collaborative grant with Missoula's All Nations Health Center that aims to increase Montana's COVID-19 vaccine uptake by investigating vaccine hesitancy and confidence in rural and Indigenous populations.*

**MISSOULA** – As the Delta variant grips the nation, understanding the “why” behind Montanans choosing to get vaccinated – or not – is the topic of a National Institutes of Health grant to the University of Montana’s **Center for Population Health Research**.

Led by Sophia Newcomer, assistant professor of epidemiology in the **School of Public and Community Health Sciences**, housed in UM’s **College of Health**, the grant will investigate the many factors influencing Montanans about their confidence – or hesitancy – when it comes to the state’s COVID-19 vaccination rates, or Montana’s overall vaccine uptake.

The \$280,000 one-year grant includes Missoula’s All Nation’s Health Center, UM’s **School of Social Work** and UM students, who will collectively work to gauge the many factors surrounding how Montanans approach the vaccine and what particular messaging might influence their choice to get vaccinated.

About 53% of Montanans have received at least one dose of the vaccine, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“Compared to urban areas, there’s very little research about vaccine uptake in rural and Indigenous populations,” Newcomer said. “We’re hoping to learn more about influencing factors when it comes to the vaccine, so that we can help Montana health care providers increase vaccine confidence with their patients.”

To do that, a multifaceted approach that heavily involves UM students, will drive two main components of the project. The first is a qualitative research study led by UM social work faculty and students, who will gather information about the vaccine from the perspective of rural and Indigenous Montanans. The second is a statewide survey of Montana primary health care providers that will examine what kind of questions and hesitation they see from patients in clinical settings.

Faculty and graduate students in social work will lead the component of interviewing Montanans about their health choices and beliefs behind their concerns about vaccines. UM public health students will analyze the survey’s data, which will help inform messaging to Montana health care providers statewide.

“The project is one year because of the urgency of the problem,” said Curtis Noonan, CPHR director. “Our most urgent need is to promote the uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine for Native Americans and our rural citizens and to then inform how providers can best communicate with

patient populations as we live with SARS-COV-2 into the future.”

Skye McGinty, executive director of **All Nations Health Center**, said despite some Montana reservation communities having high vaccine update percentages – some near 80% – the vaccine uptake in the state’s Indigenous population is still low and that retrieving accurate numbers when it comes to race and vaccine choice is difficult.

“Working with UM will allow us to take a deeper dive into the decision-making process of why or why not people are choosing to get vaccinated and understand more about barriers – whether that’s a belief system or access to information,” McGinty said. “Ultimately, we want to know what is holding up people to becoming vaccinated.”

McGinty said for many Indigenous people, there’s a host of reasons for vaccine

indecision. Some of those factors include a deep mistrust of government and medical facilities linked to historical misuse and abuse by government and medical facilities, racism and systemic oppression, which have long sustained health disparities in Native communities.

She said leveraging the community infrastructure of All Nations and UM doctoral students who work at All Nations, builds trustworthiness into the project as an Indigenous-led effort that is intertribal by nature.

“Data is people,” she said. “And we have to meet them where they are. If we can find out if the challenges of vaccine hesitancy are messaging or community trust, then that’s a potential game changer when it comes our best defense at slowing the spread and overwhelming our schools, health care personnel and facilities.”

Newcomer said the data and insights gleaned from the project are not only immediately relevant but also will provide a critical roadmap for public health for the long-term future.

“When we think about what’s next, there may be booster shots and vaccines for new variants. If we can understand what the gaps are, we have a better chance at increasing vaccine uptake now and into the future,” Newcomer said. “Moving forward, this is long-term problem to figure out how we can most effectively provide vaccines to diverse populations.”

UM began offering an **undergraduate degree in public health** last year in addition to masters

and doctoral degrees. Newcomer, who joined the UM faculty three years ago, comes from a former role collaborating with the CDC on vaccine safety research. Newcomer also studies [undervaccination in Montana children](#).

She said public health research in response to the pandemic is “dynamic and exciting” – particularly for the UM’s “many strong graduate and undergraduate programs that give UM students a front-row seat.”

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**Contact:** Sophia Newcomer, assistant professor of epidemiology, UM College of Health, 406-243-4745, [sophia.newcomer@unmontana.edu](mailto:sophia.newcomer@unmontana.edu); Skye McGinty, executive director, All Nations Health, 406) 829-9515, [smcginty@allnations.health](mailto:smcginty@allnations.health).

### Related stories:

[UM Student, Researchers Analyze Childhood Undervaccination](#)

[Student Earns UM’s First Doctorate in Public Health](#)

[New UM Undergraduate Degree in Public Health Meets the Moment](#)

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UM / News / UM Athletic Training Program Celebrates 50th With Hall of Fame Inductees



*The new UM Athletic Training Hall Fame inductees are (left to right) Robert Curry, Walter Schwank and Rick Cunningham.*



**MISSOULA** – Dr. Robert Curry, whose name is synonymous with student health care at the University of Montana, will join two fellow Grizzlies to be inducted into UM's Athletic Training Hall Fame on Friday, Sept. 24.

Curry will be recognized along with Dr. Walter Schwank and Dr. Rick Cunningham at the Homecoming Week celebration, which also will commemorate the 50th anniversary of UM's **Athletic Training Program**, co-founded in 1971 by Schwank and the late Naseby Rhinehart.

"Our three inductees perfectly illustrate the far-reaching impact and commitment our graduates bring to the field of health care in general and the health of athletes specifically," said Valerie Moody, program director and professor in the School of Integrative Physiology and Athletic Training, "We are so honored to recognize them for inclusion in our Hall of Fame."

UM's Athletic Training Program was one of the first in the nation. Over the years the program has grown in size and reputation, and earned numerous national accreditations, including an accreditation for delivery of a Master's Degree in Athletic Training in 2015. Today the program is housed in the College of Health's School of Integrative Physiology and Athletic Training and has 16 students enrolled in the master's program and about 45 students in the pre-Athletic Training Program.

Curry was an integral part of UM's student health services and Grizzly Athletics for almost four decades. He was recognized in 1999 when his former workplace was named the Curry Health Center in his honor. He remains a regular on the sidelines of Grizzly football games.

Schwank, who joined UM in 1961, developed bachelor and master degree programs in recreation and served in University leadership roles in health, physical education and athletics. He retired in 1980.

Cunningham, a 1977 UM graduate, served as an instructor for several universities, executive director of the Northwest Chapter of the American Red Cross and later as executive director of Big Mountain Commercial Association, a nonprofit public trade association that raises funds to pay for common services and programs that enhance Big Mountain, Whitefish and the Flathead Valley.

For more information on the Hall of Fame and 50th Anniversary Celebration email Valerie Moody at [valerie.moody@umontana.edu](mailto:valerie.moody@umontana.edu).

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**Contact:** Valerie Moody, professor, School of Integrative Physiology and Athletic Training, 406-243-2703, [valerie.moody@umontana.edu](mailto:valerie.moody@umontana.edu).

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UM / News / UM Grad, Former General Earns Honorary Doctorate

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

# UM GRAD, FORMER GENERAL EARNs HONORARY DOCTORATE

16 SEPTEMBER 2021

*McGuire rose to the rank of brigadier general during her distinguished 32-year military career.*

**MISSOULA** – Groundbreaking University of

Montana graduate Colleen McGuire has had many firsts in her life.

She was the first woman from Montana to rise to the rank of brigadier general. She was the first woman ever to serve as provost marshal general of the U.S. Army, leading its highest law enforcement office. She was the first female commander of the Army's Criminal Investigations Command, as well as the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Now she has earned her first honorary doctorate. On Thursday, Sept. 16, the Montana Board of Regents approved UM's recommendation to present McGuire with an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters. The University will bestow the degree Dec. 18 during Fall Commencement ceremonies.



“Brig. Gen. McGuire had an unparalleled, pioneering career in the U.S. Army,” said UM President Seth Bodnar, also an Army veteran. “She is an example of exceptional leadership, service and dedication. Beyond her impressive career and numerous awards, she is a true Montanan, having retired to her home state. We are thrilled to present an honorary doctorate to this valuable member of our UM family.”

A Missoula native and graduate of Sentinel High School, McGuire earned an undergraduate degree from UM's School of Journalism in 1979. During her time on campus, she was a student leader in ROTC, a cheerleader, a rugby player and a member of the Delta Gamma Fraternity.

During her 32-year military career, McGuire earned two more degrees: a Master of Military Arts and Sciences from the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, and a Master of National Security and Strategic Studies from the Army War College in Pennsylvania.



Her career included overseas missions to Iraq, Germany and Somalia. Her last position was at the Pentagon, serving as director of manpower and personnel on the Joint Staff.

During her storied career, McGuire was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Superior Service Medal and Bronze Star, among numerous other military decorations and awards. In 2010 she earned UM's Distinguished Alumni Award, and in 2019 she was inducted into the Army Women's Foundation Hall of Fame.

McGuire retired from the Army in 2012 and began working for Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, assisting him with the study of sexual assault response systems in the Army. She also worked as the executive director of the Delta Gamma Fraternity in Columbus, Ohio. She remains an active UM alumna, serving six years on the University Alumni Association board of directors. She also became a trustee of the UM Foundation in 2020.

In his letter of recommendation, Maj. Gen. John Meyer Jr. wrote: "Colleen has always established an exceptional pattern of excellence. She has been consistently placed in positions of increasing responsibility, where she directly influenced organizations and people in positive and beneficial ways.

"Her ability to manage and lead large organizations, whether in peacetime or combat operations, is without comparison," Meyer continued. "Colleen is, without reservation, a credit to everything the University of Montana represents."

McGuire lives in Kalispell and owns a cattle ranch in eastern Oregon.

###

**Contact:** Dave Kuntz, UM director of strategic communications, 406-243-5659, [dave.kuntz@mso.umt.edu](mailto:dave.kuntz@mso.umt.edu).

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UM / News / Montana Program Aims to Increase College Student Retention

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

# MONTANA PROGRAM AIMS TO INCREASE COLLEGE STUDENT RETENTION

15 SEPTEMBER 2021

*UM sophomore Shiena Medrano credits the Montana 10 program for helping her navigate the complexities of college life. Today, the honors student has found a place and a purpose as a member of the campus community.*

**MISSOULA** – As far as challenges facing first-year college students go, Shiena Medrano had more than her fair share when arriving at the University of Montana in the fall of 2020.

Medrano had moved with her mother from Manilla, Philippines, to live with family in **Philipsburg** just two years before. Although she spoke English, she was still processing massive changes in her life – the transition from living in a large and crowded city to a small-town campus, the cultural differences among her classmates and, as with every student in the past year, the seismic shifts in learning brought by COVID-19.

Medrano, a proud Montana resident, is now an honors student. She credits her success to a relatively new initiative, the **Montana 10** program, which provides students with needed scholarship money and something equally important – emotional and academic support.

“The stipend I get is very helpful,” said Medrano, who is double majoring in accounting and management information systems. “But the Montana 10 team helps give you guidance and life skills. They tell you, ‘You have time to figure it out, and we will get through this.’”

Launched by the Montana University System Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education in 2019, Montana 10 aims to increase retention and graduation rates of Montana college students. The program is open to first-time freshmen who are Montana residents and PELL-eligible because of financial need. Campus participants include UM, Missoula College and Helena College.

Crystine Miller, director of student affairs and student engagement at OCHE, said the program’s name refers to the 10 strategies and support systems provided to students in the program – all of which are integrated, comprehensive and evidence-based to improve student outcomes.

“Montana 10 is one primary strategy of OCHE to make good on the promise that increased access to higher education actually translates to more Montanans with college degrees and a more complete workforce,” Miller said. “We designed and implemented this evidence-based program, which advocates for increased commitment to student success and helps our state achieve its college attainment and workforce development goals.”

Based around what Miller calls the “hidden curriculum” – challenges and barriers students face,

such as additional costs –Montana 10 includes training and resources for Native American and nontraditional students whose needs differ from the typical freshman, as well as low-income students.

“They have this whole set of additional things they have to navigate, primarily financial aid. They have to figure out housing,” Miller said. “Anything that has a cost they have to figure out differently than a student who has other ways to pay for the cost of higher ed.”

The program offers financial support, such as scholarships, textbook stipends and monthly incentives to students, as well as specialized math and writing courses. Advising is another key component of the program, with a student-to-advising ratio less than half the national average.

Amy Capolupo, director of Montana 10 and UM’s Office for Disability Equity, said students in the program have secondary advisers and an academic and faculty adviser. These advisers address financial and housing concerns, set up counseling care and help students meet goals. Advising is personalized according to student needs.

“Their primary goal is to make sure all those other components students need are in place,” Capolupo said. “Their adviser is their person.”

Miller said those who have not historically had access to higher education are faring worse than peers when it comes to taking on debt, graduating on time and staying in school. She said it is invaluable to ask what happens to those students.

“We should measure ourselves by what we are able to provide for students,” Miller said. “We have to get them here, and then we have to work full time to keep them.”

Capolupo said in one instance, a 3.8 GPA student had an unexpected medical issue that, if not for the help of Montana 10, would have prevented him from re-enrolling. Montana 10 used the program’s financial supports to cover some of the outstanding balance on his student account. Program advisers also helped him get registration holds removed and helped connect him to resources to get insurance issues resolved.

Although similar programs exist at City University of New York, such as the Accelerated Study Assistant Program, and Ohio Community College – where such programs have doubled on-time graduation rates – Montana faces different challenges with mostly residential, rural students who primarily need to find housing and child care, Miller said.

Advisers for the Montana 10 program help students find classes with flexible attendance options if they need to work or watch kids, and remote learning options that allow them to remain involved in the academic environment.

The Montana 10 program just wrapped up its first year with 200 students, 183 at UM and Missoula College. The second cohort of 35 students are attending Helena College this fall.

Capolupo hopes the program grows over the next few years with state investment.

“This is something UM can be proud of,” Capolupo said. “It’s an honor to work for UM in the context of this program.”

Although a second-year student, Medrano now has enough credits to qualify as a junior, serves as a member of the Dean’s Student Advisory Council at the Davidson Honors College – of which she is a member – and is an Indigenous/Rural Outreach Ambassador for Accelerate Montana. She’s growing accustomed to small-town life, loves the natural setting around Missoula and has made many friends, including “a bunch” of other fellow international students.

“College gives you the power to select your tribe,” she said, “and it’s a really great community here.”

###

**Contact:** Crystine Miller, director, student affairs & student engagement, Montana University System Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, 406-449-9133, [cmiller@montana.edu](mailto:cmiller@montana.edu); Amy Capolupo, director, UM Office for Disability Equity and Montana 10, 406-243-4584, [amy.capolupo@umontana.edu](mailto:amy.capolupo@umontana.edu).

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UM / News / UM's Julie Wolter to Lead Online Learning and Innovation

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

# UM'S JULIE WOLTER TO LEAD ONLINE LEARNING AND INNOVATION

14 SEPTEMBER 2021

*Julie Wolter, UM's new associate vice provost for innovation and online learning, sees a bright future for Montana's nontraditional students thanks to new programming and advancing online technologies.*



**MISSOULA** – It's two days into the fall semester at the University of Montana, and Julie Wolter, UM's new associate vice provost for innovation and online learning, is not only thinking about the bright faces of students streaming into campus, but also about potential learners throughout the state she wants to reach — even if they never step foot in Missoula.

She sees a Griz in the making everywhere. In the office assistant working in Whitefish who wants to learn new computer skills, in the Northern Cheyenne employee living in Lame Deer looking to get a certificate in digital design, and in the busy mother in Glendive needing just a few more credits to complete a Bachelor of Arts degree.

The nontraditional students in Wolter's sights are becoming increasingly critical to higher education as the population of high school graduates declines — a demographic shift much discussed by the nation's academicians. The challenge is further heightened in rural states like Montana with its small and sparse population base.

"There are groups of individuals we may not yet have touched or created accessible programming for who are our future," said Wolter, who has served as chair of UM's School of Speech, Language, Hearing and Occupational Sciences for the past five years. "It's exciting to explore all the possibilities for complementing our existing on-campus programming and to grow new learning opportunities — such as workforce partnerships — in unique and interesting ways."

Wolter good-naturedly admits it might be difficult connecting the dots between her newly created position and that as a professor and researcher in UM's School of Speech Language, Hearing and Occupational Sciences. But she has been steeped in the subject of innovative online and distance learning, studying ways to support integration of new ideas in established systems for some time.

Before joining UM in 2015, the **Billings** native served 10 years on the faculty at Utah State University, including four years as chair of its Speech-Language Pathology Division. While division chair, she helped grow online and distance programming for SLP students across Utah.

For example, she directed the launch of a distance graduate Speech-Language Pathology program that included unique and innovative ways to provide lab and clinical experiential learning, including the provision of teletherapy clinical services. She also worked with department faculty leaders to grow an online bachelors program that started with 20 students in

2007 and grew to 1,700 students by the time she headed home to Montana in 2015.

One year after arriving at UM, Wolter and her faculty team landed a \$1.25 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to train Montanans through distance education to become speech-language pathologists, with an emphasis in those serving rural areas and tribal communities.

The project, conducted in partnership with UM's Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities, provided much needed access and financial support for students living in rural areas who were committed to learning, staying and serving in their underserved communities. Wolter said this experience further deepened her commitment for creating new educational pathways for students from all backgrounds and walks of life.

Nathan Lindsay, UM vice provost for Academic Affairs, said Wolter's zeal for supporting students in whatever stage or place in life they might be, set her apart from other candidates for this new position.

"Dr. Wolter is not only passionate about growing traditional online programs, but also has many ideas for expanding opportunities for new learners in noncredit and workforce development efforts," Lindsay said. "Her creativity and skills in scaling a wide range of degree offerings will serve her well in this leadership role."

Wolter is experienced in and is particularly excited about stackable programming, an educational concept gaining popularity that starts students at the certificate or credential level of schooling and building eventually to a bachelor's or graduate degree. Credential and certificate programs, she adds, also can help workers upskill to changing market demands and provide educational momentum to students who want to learn but aren't yet prepared to take on a four-year degree.

"One of my roles in this new position – and an exciting direction that is being focused on as a priority for action by President Bodnar – is to support programs on campus as they develop their own stackable programming and new learner initiatives," Wolter said.

She also is collaborating with UM's Accelerate Montana team out of UM's Office of Research and Creative Scholarship to coordinate the University's online educational programs with the Montanan community to respond to the unique educational and training needs of the state.

Wolter is excited about growing UM's new and already robust online offerings and technology, both of which have proven their mettle during the COVID-19 pandemic. She notes the unique opportunity for investment and expansion of online programs through collaborations with an online program management partnership already underway in such programs as social work, speech-language pathology and the Missoula College. She looks forward to building on the robust expertise of the recently expanded UOnline team to develop new online courses for programs across campus.

Although she's only been on the job a few days, Wolter already is diving deep into all of the possibilities for expanding on the notion of what makes a typical UM student. It's an exciting, challenging opportunity and one filled with great potential.

"Innovation is the first word in this new position," she said, "and I look forward to supporting, coordinating and continuing to expand our innovative efforts at UM as we think about learning, education and community partnerships in new and creative ways."

###

**Contact:** Julie Wolter, UM professor and associate vice provost for innovation and online learning, 406-243-2605, [julie.wolter@mso.umt.edu](mailto:julie.wolter@mso.umt.edu).

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UM / News / Four UM Graduate Students Named Prestigious Wyss Scholars

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

# FOUR UM GRADUATE STUDENTS NAMED PRESTIGIOUS WYSS SCHOLARS

13 SEPTEMBER 2021

**MISSOULA** – Four University of Montana graduate students have been named Wyss Scholars



for Conservation for the American West. This prestigious program provides financial support to UM graduate students who are committed to careers in Western land conservation through a federal or state land management agency or at a nonprofit in the region.

The scholarship program is funded through the Wyss Foundation, a private charitable organization dedicated to supporting innovative, lasting solutions that improve lives, empower communities and strengthen connections to the land. Wyss scholarships significantly reduce the cost of graduate school attendance at UM.

*UM graduate student Sawyer Connelly is pursuing a master's degree in environmental studies while dually enrolled in UM's Alexander Blewett III School of Law.*

**Sawyer Connelly** from Hardwick, Vermont, is a graduate student pursuing a master's degree in environmental studies at UM while dually enrolled in a juris doctorate at UM's **Alexander Blewett III School of Law** and UM's **Natural Resource Conflict Resolution Program**, in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation. Connelly said he wants to protect the natural world and increase accessibility and equity by helping shape tomorrow's conservation funding mechanisms and policy.



Connelly received his bachelor's degree in environmental science from Colorado College. After a brief period working as a fly-fishing guide around the world, he spent 5 years working for nonprofits, and for state and federal governments on hunting, fishing, and public land issues.

*Kirsten Gerbatsch, a third-year UM law student, was selected as a Wyss scholar for her interests in environmental and American Indian law.*

**Kirsten Gerbatsch** from Oakland, New Jersey, is a third-year student in UM's Alexander Blewett III School of Law, with a



concentration in environmental and American Indian law. Gerbatsch is passionate about reimagining the future of natural resource protection and wants to forge new legal models to conserve natural and cultural resources by promoting Native self-determination efforts and tribal conservation practices.

Gerbatsch earned her bachelor's degree in American history from

Reed College. Her drive to hold corporations and governing entities accountable to protect the environment began when she lived in Butte — the largest Superfund complex in America. Years later, when Gerbatsch worked for the Montana Budget and Policy Center during several state legislative sessions, she decided to pivot her career toward conservation law. She said she realized that rural communities bear the dual burdens of post-mining ecological disaster and boom-and-bust industry, yet are often barred from the decision-making process. She also witnessed problematic misperceptions of American Indians that negatively impact the public policy process.

“At this juncture in my career, I know that natural resources issues cannot be siloed, nor can sovereign tribal nations,” Gerbatsch said.

*UM graduate student Audrey Glendenning is pursuing a master's degree in resource conservation as a Wyss scholar.*

**Audrey Glendenning**, from Germantown, Maryland, earned a bachelor's degree in



environmental science and policy from the University of Maryland before pursuing a master's degree in resource conservation at UM's **W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation**.



Glendenning is passionate about public lands policy, in particular how public lands planning documents and land ownership patterns impact and influence Indigenous use and interest.

"I look forward to a career with a nonprofit or government agency using policy knowledge and research to advocate for the conservation of public lands in the West and amplify tribal perspectives on land management," she said.



*Amy Katz, a UM graduate student, is combining UM's certificate in GIS with a master's degree in environmental studies.*

**Amy Katz** from Durango, Colorado, received a bachelor's degree in environmental studies from Bates College, followed by a Fulbright grant to teach university students in Laos. At UM, Katz is combining UM's certificate in geographic information systems certification with a master's degree in environmental studies. Katz plans to support conservation efforts in Montana through collaborative problem solving, policy, and visual and spatial representations of landscapes. Born and raised in southwest Colorado, Katz developed a desire for conservation through hiking, running and skiing on public lands.

“More recently, I have seen how successful conservation is achieved through building community and communicating policy to the public – the latter of which can happen through visual representations of places,” Katz said.

Katz said she is able to bolster these skills through her graduate work in environmental policy, GIS and in the nonprofits the Natural Resource Conflict Resolution Program and the Heart of the Rockies, where she worked for the summer to facilitate conversations around rural development and landscape conservation design in western Montana.

The Wyss scholarship program is funded through the Wyss Foundation, a private charitable organization dedicated to supporting innovative, lasting solutions that improve lives, empower communities and strengthen connections to the land. Wyss scholarships significantly reduce the cost of graduate school attendance at UM.

###

**Contact:** Len Broberg, professor, UM Environmental Studies, 406-243-5209, [len.broberg@umontana.edu](mailto:len.broberg@umontana.edu).

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UM / News / UM Unveils Homecoming Week Event Lineup, Postpones Parade Until 2022

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

# UM UNVEILS HOMECOMING WEEK EVENT LINEUP, POSTPONES PARADE UNTIL 2022

10 SEPTEMBER 2021

*The UM Dance Team creates Griz spirit at UM Homecoming in front of Main Hall. The UM Alumni Association announces the event lineup for UM's 2021 Homecoming week, despite postponing the UM Homecoming Parade for a variety of considerations.*

**MISSOULA** – The University of Montana Alumni Association today announced the 2021 Homecoming week event lineup that will take place from Sept. 20 to Sept. 25.

The annual UM Homecoming Parade has been postponed in 2021 due to a series of considerations, but event organizers are excited to bring back the beloved tradition in 2022.

“This Homecoming we are celebrating the ‘Heart of a Grizzly,’ and we are eager to continue century-old traditions to welcome home thousands of UM alumni,” said LeAnn Meyer, UM Alumni Association Director. “Whether it is painting the sidewalk for the Hello Walk, cheering along at the Pep Rally or recognizing our Distinguished Alumni, we are thrilled for our alums to return to this vibrant campus for such a special week of events.”

The following events are sponsored by the UM Alumni Association during Homecoming Week. Each event is open to the public and media are invited to attend.

- Hello Walk on Sept. 21 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Hello Walk will take place on the sidewalk in front of Turner Hall.
- Griz on Tap on Sept. 23 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Griz on Tap will take place at Draught Works at 915 Toole Ave.
- Distinguished Alumni Award Ceremony and panel discussion on Sept. 24 begins at 5:30 p.m. This event will take place at the University Center Ballroom.
- Yell Night Pep Rally on Sept. 24 at 8 p.m. The Yell Night Pep Rally will take place on the Oval and feature the UM Marching Band, Singing on the Steps, lighting of the M and fireworks.

UM’s annual Homecoming football game will kickoff at 1 p.m. on Sept. 25 when the Griz take on Cal Poly in Washington-Grizzly Stadium.

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**Contact:** LeAnn Meyer, University of Montana Alumni Association director,

leann.meyer@mso.umt.edu, 406-243-5258

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UM / News / UM Professor Earns \$2.5M Grant to Study Hantavirus Disease Transmission

COLLEGE OF FORESTRY AND CONSERVATION

# UM PROFESSOR EARNS \$2.5M GRANT TO STUDY HANTAVIRUS DISEASE TRANSMISSION

10 SEPTEMBER 2021

*Researchers Angie Luis (right) and Amy Kuenzi prepare to collect data from a deer mouse.*

**MISSOULA** – University of Montana researcher Angela Luis has been awarded a National Science Foundation grant to study how diversity of competitor species affects infectious disease transmission in wildlife – specifically hantavirus in deer mice.

Luis earned the five-year, \$2.5 million grant from NSF's Ecology and Evolution of Infectious Disease Program. She is an associate professor of population and disease ecology in the University's **W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation**.

The goal of the study is to learn more about how to predict increases in hantavirus in rodents, and, ideally, help prevent its spread to humans, Luis said. While transmission to humans is rare, hundreds have died from the infection in the U.S., and hantaviruses have killed tens of thousands of people worldwide.

The study's underlying principles also could apply to other wildlife-based human diseases. Luis said this is especially important as biodiversity disappears rapidly and infectious diseases increasingly spill over from wildlife to humans.

"The big question for this study is how do competitors affect transmission of disease," Luis said.

Within an ecosystem, species interact with one another. In Montana, for example, a mountain lion might prey on an elk calf. Other species – called competitors – jockey for resources. Deer mice, say, compete with montane voles for habitat and food.

Changes in biodiversity – how many species and what species are on the landscape – can affect all sorts of things, including how disease is spread among animals and from animals to humans. How exactly that works, though, is still up for debate.

Luis said there is debate among disease ecologists centered around the ideas of "dilution" and "amplification" – whether increased species diversity decreases or increases disease risk, respectively – and, specifically, when to expect one process or the other.

In some ecosystems, increasing competitor diversity decreases disease risk. This is called the



dilution effect because higher species diversity dilutes out infection.

“The idea is that if you have a more diverse community, you’ll have less disease transmission,” Luis said. “It’s a nice public health message, right? If we are protecting biodiversity, we are protecting ourselves.”

However, as Luis explains, that’s not always the case.

“You don’t always see that correlation. You sometimes see the opposite,” she said.

A more diverse community also sometimes can increase disease risk – the amplification effect.

“Sometimes if you have more wildlife around, you have more wildlife around that could infect humans,” she said. “The dilution effect is not universal.”

Current scientific research hasn’t fully uncovered when to expect one effect over another, and it’s unknown how these competing forces may work within one disease system.

Luis’ new project will examine potential causes of dilution and amplification and how they interact to help move beyond the debate and instead clarify which mechanisms are most important in determining disease transmission. It also will identify any patterns about when one process might occur over the other.

“We’re starting to say, it depends, and that’s what I’m trying to get at,” she said. “What does it depend on? Why do you sometimes get more of one than the other? Let’s look at what’s driving the pattern.”

Luis will study three ways that competitors could affect hantavirus transmission rates in deer mice:

- First, competitors can reduce host density, reducing the number of mice across the landscape.
- Second, they can impact contact rates by changing the way mice interact with one another.
- Finally, they can impact immunity by stressing mice. When mice are stressed out, their

immunity generally drops, leaving them more vulnerable to disease.

*Professor  
Angela Luis  
uses  
enclosures at  
UM's Bandy  
Ranch to help  
study the way  
competitor  
species  
diversity affects  
disease  
transmission in  
wildlife.*

The project  
will consist  
of three  
phases.

In the first  
phase, Luis'  
team will  
monitor  
natural

populations of deer mice at three long-term field sites. This involves trapping deer mice and competitors to understand what the community looks like and how many of those animals are infected with hantavirus.

The second phase involves manipulating populations.

"We built these six big enclosures at Bandy Ranch that are about 30 meters by 30 meters," Luis said. "We can put a certain number of deer mice in there and a certain number of competitors in there and see how they are changing the deer mice's behavior and immunity."

The third component involves analyzing long-term datasets from Montana and from the Southwest spanning 25 years, showing how competitors have affected deer mice populations.

At the end of the study, researchers also will conduct a broad analysis, fitting all of the research findings together to come up with mathematical models that predict when you might expect dilution or amplification in certain scenarios.



Amy Kuenzi, a professor at Montana Tech, is co-principal investigator on the grant. The grant also will help fund three UM doctoral students, a postdoc position, a lab manager position and a number of undergraduate field technician roles.

“The landscape is changing – largely from humans – through all these different anthropogenic things like habitat loss or conversion, climate change,” Luis said. “All of these things that people are doing affect the wildlife communities on the landscape, which can affect transmission of nasty things back to them.

“As we’ve seen with the pandemic, zoonotic disease outbreaks – outbreaks that are moving from animals to humans – have only become more common over the last 30 to 40 years,” Luis said. “This is not the last pandemic. We need to understand how what we are doing leads to these outbreaks.”

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**Contact:** Angela Luis, UM associate professor of population and disease ecology, [angela.luis@mso.umt.edu](mailto:angela.luis@mso.umt.edu), 406-243-6606.

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UM / News / UM Rides Maroon Wave Into the Weekend

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

# UM RIDES MAROON WAVE INTO THE WEEKEND

09 SEPTEMBER 2021

*A Griz fan feeling the energy at Husky Stadium last Saturday. The Griz play Western Illinois this weekend during UM's Maroon-Out Game.*

**MISSOULA** – Perched on the 50-yard line and surrounded by a sea of purple, four Montana fans at last Saturday's Grizzlies-Huskies game said the energy in the stadium during the historic upset at Seattle felt so electric, you could almost reach out and touch it.



“I would say for both the Griz and the Huskies at the start of the game, the feeling was absolutely palpable,” said Kris Kloser, UM Seattle-based alumnus. “The thirst for college football is just incredible.”

Kloser, who also serves as the [University of Montana Alumni Association](#) board chair, said the game was “beyond memorable,” as the Grizzlies defeated the No. 20-ranked University of Washington Huskies 13-7 – one of the biggest upsets in college football history.

*Four Montana fans at the Grizzlies-Huskies game last Saturday.*

The victory was UM’s first win over a Pac-12 opponent since 1996 and was just the sixth time a Football Championship Subdivision team won over a ranked Football Bowl Subdivision opponent in football history. Named the FCS “National Team of the Week,” the Grizzlies are now ranked No. 4 in an FCS Top-25 media poll.



Fresh off-the-heels of the national upset, Griz Nation is energized and ready to fill Washington-Grizzly Stadium on Saturday for the first in-person, fall, home football game in two years, when the Griz play Western Illinois at 6 p.m.

Saturday is also the annual Maroon-Out Game, where fans are encouraged to purchase an official game T-shirt for the home opener and fill the stadium in a blanket of maroon. The shirts are available for purchase at Universal Athletics, Bob Wards, the M Store, the UM Bookstore and the Grizzly Scholarship Office. T-shirts are \$15, and a portion of proceeds will benefit the Grizzly Scholarship Association and scholarships for student-athletes.

“I know I speak on behalf of our University community and of all our Griz fans, that we are beyond excited to safely gather again this year and support our incredible student-athletes and teams that bring an unparalleled vibrancy to the Griz spirit,” said Greg Sundberg, GSA executive director and senior associate athletic director.

To ensure safety and contact-less entry into the games this year, Grizzly Athletics is encouraging fans to purchase and download tickets through a mobile option. Tickets are still available for Saturday’s game, and fans must first create an account with Griz Tix. After mobile tickets are purchased, fans can [access mobile tickets](#) on Apple or Android phones.

Information and directions for paperless tickets can be found at <https://www.umt.edu/griztix/> or by emailing [griztix@umontana.edu](mailto:griztix@umontana.edu).

This week, Grizzly Athletics also announced the opening of a [beer garden in Washington-Grizzly Stadium](#) with alcohol available to purchase inside the stadium.

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**Contact:** Dave Kuntz, UM strategic communications director, 406-243-5659, [dave.kuntz@umontana.edu](mailto:dave.kuntz@umontana.edu).

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UM / News / UM Earns Prestigious Ranking for Sustainable Practices

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

# UM EARNs PRESTIGIOUS RANKING FOR SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

08 SEPTEMBER 2021

*The University of Montana has earned a prestigious award for achievements and programs in sustainability from a national organization that measures sustainability across higher education.*

**MISSOULA** – The University of Montana has earned a Silver rating in recognition of its sustainability achievements from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System, or STARS, measures and encourages sustainability in all aspects of higher education.

“STARS was developed by the campus sustainability community to provide high standards for recognizing campus sustainability efforts,” said AASHE Executive Director Meghan Fay Zahniser. “The University of Montana has demonstrated a substantial commitment to sustainability by achieving a STARS Silver rating and is to be congratulated for their efforts.” **UM Sustainability** manages the University’s ongoing efforts to become socially, economically and environmentally sustainable in its operations, classrooms and facilities. Programs include integrating more sustainable practices in water use, waste, transportation, green buildings and grounds, food and energy.



UM has been a STARS reporting institution since 2014, when it first earned a Silver rating. In 2017, UM earned a Bronze rating due to an increase in carbon emissions and several other factors. The step backward motivated UM sustainability advocates to work hard to increase the institution’s score and sustainability leadership with its next submission.

Earning a total of 60.89 points, compared to the 2017 score of 42.13, means that UM has significantly improved in a few key areas and is competitive among peer institutions in the northern Rockies. UM Sustainability Director Eva Rocke said the 2021 reporting to STARS reflected growth in several areas of the University’s sustainability work that are a campuswide effort.



“STARS data collection is a huge lift, and there is no chance we could paint this holistic picture of campus sustainability without the help of our partners, which include everyone from Financial Aid to Facilities Services and Campus Dining.” With more than 900 participants in 40 countries, the STARS program is the most widely recognized framework in the world for publicly reporting comprehensive information related to a college or university’s sustainability performance. Participants report achievements in five overall areas, including academics, engagement, operations, planning and administration, and innovation and leadership.

“We are very proud to have achieved a STARS Silver rating for our sustainability accomplishments,” Rocke said. “We look forward to watching our sustainability efforts grow and improve through the STARS program.”

AASHE is an association of colleges and universities that is working to create a sustainable future. Its mission is to empower higher education to lead a sustainable transformation. The organization provides resources, professional development and a network of support to enable institutions of higher education to model and advance sustainability in everything they do, from governance and operations to education. The University of Montana’s STARS report is publicly available at <https://bit.ly/UMStarsReport>.

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**Contact:** Eva Rocke, director, UM Office of Sustainability, 406-243-4323, [eva.rocke@umontana.edu](mailto:eva.rocke@umontana.edu).

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UM / News / SpectrUM Awarded \$250K to Co-Design Indigenous Science Experiences

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

# SPECTRUM AWARDED \$250K TO CO-DESIGN INDIGENOUS SCIENCE EXPERIENCES

08 SEPTEMBER 2021

*Young learners participate in the Science Learning Tent, provided by spectrUM Discovery Area and SciNation, at the Arlee Celebration on the Flathead Reservation.*

**MISSOULA** – The University of Montana spectrUM Discovery Area has received a \$250,000 Museums for America project grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. It will fund a three-year project, allowing **spectrUM** and tribal partners from across Montana to develop inclusive museum experiences that engage visitors with Indigenous science and culture.

Led by spectrUM Director Jessie Herbert-Meny, the project will deepen and explore cross-cultural approaches to science education while embedding Indigenous science and ways of knowing throughout spectrUM's new museum location at Missoula Public Library.

Shane Sangrey, formerly a diversity specialist in UM's College of Health and currently student services counselor at Stone Child College on the Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation, will direct the project's engagement with tribal partners, which will include a project advisory group with representatives from tribal communities across Montana, as well as spectrUM's long-standing SciNation advisory group on the Flathead Reservation.

The project aims to strengthen partnerships in Indian Country while developing inclusive learning experiences for all K-12 students and educators. With tribal partners, elders and advisers, spectrUM will co-design a suite of hands-on Indigenous science activities and accompanying curriculum resources for educators, as well as role model engagement and a video library featuring Native American scholars, scientists and elders sharing Indigenous science and ways of knowing.



“Our goal is for every visitor who enters spectrUM's spaces at Missoula Public Library to feel a sense of belonging and a sense of connection to Montana Native American heritage and science,” said Herbert-Meny. “We're honored for this opportunity to work with tribal scientists, elders and partners across the state to develop inclusive museum experiences that will benefit all our visitors.”

Activities and programming also will travel to EmPower Place, a free family learning center at the Missoula Food Bank and Community Center co-operated by spectrUM, the Food Bank and Missoula Public Library.

The project builds on spectrUM's strong partnerships with Montana tribal communities. Science on Wheels, spectrUM's mobile science program, has traveled to all seven of Montana's American Indian reservations, many of them frequently. On the Flathead Reservation, spectrUM co-designs programming and exhibits with its SciNation advisory group, a collaboration that has garnered awards from the Center for Advancing Research Impact in Society, the Montana Indian Education Association and the Coalition for the Public Understanding of Science.

Inspiring a culture of learning and discovery for all, spectrUM Discovery Area is a hands-on science center based at the new Missoula Public Library. Since 2006, spectrUM has brought exhibits and educators to 73 schools and public libraries in 31 Montana counties. SpectrUM is part of UM's Broader Impacts Group, which works to engage the public, including K-12 students, with UM research and scholarship.

IMLS is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. It advances, supports and empowers America's museums, libraries and related organizations through grantmaking, research and policy development. Its vision is a nation where museums and libraries work together to transform the lives of individuals and communities.

For more information, call Herbert-Meny at 406-207-1010 or visit [spectrum.umt.edu/](https://spectrum.umt.edu/). SpectrUM's main location at the new Missoula Public Library is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. EmPower Place is open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday and from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday and Friday. Admission to both spaces is free.

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**Contact:** Jessie Herbert-Meny, spectrUM Discovery Area director, 406-207-1010, [jessie.herbert@umontana.edu](mailto:jessie.herbert@umontana.edu).



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UM / News / Backcountry Experience Bonds UM Freshman



UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

# BACKCOUNTRY EXPERIENCE BONDS UM FRESHMAN

03 SEPTEMBER 2021

*First-year UM students return their camping and backpacking gear after spending four days in the wilderness with UM's Freshman Wilderness Experience. The program provides a close-knit experience for new UM students in diverse outdoor trips across Montana.*

**MISSOULA** – On the same day that over 1,000 incoming freshmen arrived on the University of Montana campus to move into their dorms, a smaller group of first-year students returned their



packs and camp gear at UM's Campus Recreation Outdoor Program Office after spending several days backpacking, canoeing and making new friends in the backcountry.

*UM students in the Freshman Wilderness Experience explore Montana's backcountry through one of several trips organized through the program, now its seventh year.*

"I thought it was so cool that I was going to be able to find people who shared this common interest with me from day one –

before everyone else gets here," said Taylor Sadewic, a freshman from **Sandpoint, Idaho**.



The **Freshman Wilderness Experience**, a program sponsored by **Campus Recreation's Outdoor Program** and UM's **Wilderness Institute**, is many students' first trek into the backcountry. The program takes first-year students on three-night, four-day backpacking and river trips through some of Montana's most beautiful wilderness areas, including the Bitterroot Mountains, the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness, the Chain of Lakes and the Upper Missouri River, among other places.

The program, which started in 2014, helps students develop friendships, a connection to Montana and confidence to carry them into the new semester.

"Coming to college is arguably one of the biggest transitions of their life and this helps make sure students are set up for success before jumping into this big pond," said Elizabeth Fricke,



director of the Campus Recreation Outdoor Program.



*FWE participants paddle the Missouri River together on a multi-day canoe trip. The trips are organized and planned by UM's Campus Recreation Outdoor Program and Wilderness Institute.*

This year, about 150 students

participated in the program. Students are randomly divided into small groups that are led by upperclassmen, many of whom went on FWE trips as participants their freshman year themselves and want to provide that experience for other students.

“It made me feel more connected to Missoula and Montana and the University so I wanted to stay involved,” said Madeline Damon, a graduate student who attended FWE as a freshman and now works as the program’s student coordinator.

Students bond over the obstacles they overcome as a group, which was especially true this year when groups got hit with thunderstorms that soaked all of their gear.

Charles Nance, a freshman from **Los Angeles** who went on a trip to the Pintlers, kept the group’s morale up when he started singing during a freezing rain and hail storm. Nance led the group in song through the storm as they held a tarp to keep the water from pooling over their gear. Once back from the trip and sitting on the warm pavement outside the rec center, the group referred to it as one of the high points of the trip.

“You make connections here that you can’t find anywhere else,” said Elizabeth Davidson, one of the group’s leaders who went on a FWE trip as a freshman. “In the outdoors, you have to be your most true self. We’re all out there working together and you really learn a lot about the people you’re with.”

*A FWE group collectively howls together at a mountain summit.*

Although the weather and elevation were challenging parts of the trip, Nance said he enjoyed seeing new biomes and catching his first trout on a fly rod at a lake near one of the campsites.



“The program is a great opportunity to give students their first experience in the backcountry and educate them about wilderness,” said Andrea Stephens, director of undergraduate and field education for the Wilderness Institute in the **W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation** at UM.

On the trip, students learn how to use camp stoves, hang bear bags and practice Leave No Trace principles. For students who want an even more immersive wilderness experience, Stephens said the program serves as a springboard for the Wilderness and Civilization program available at UM, a semester-long minor that takes students on float and backpacking trips.

After hiking upwards of 20 miles over several days, the students drove back to campus and reunited with other groups. As they emptied their packs, returned any rented gear and cleaned



cookware, students recounted lightning and hail storms, huckleberry picking, fishing, cooking blunders and the new memories they had made.

Sadewic said it was a little overwhelming to return to a bustling campus after being in the woods for four days, but she and her fellow group members found comfort in knowing they already had a close group of friends.



*FWE  
participants  
return rented  
gear and  
unpack outside  
of UM's  
Campus  
Outdoor  
Recreation  
Program Office.*

“One of the coolest parts about it was getting to meet these people and getting so close to them so quickly and now I have seven

friends going into the rest of this experience,” Sadewic said.

Later that evening, the students gathered on a nearby field to eat pizza and perform skits about their trips for one other and parents. One group joked about going swimming but forgetting towels, another talked about accidentally going off trail and bushwhacking, and one group shared that they completely bypassed their campsite and had to backtrack.

Students sat with their groups as they watched the skits, often leaning over to tap each other on the shoulder and laugh at particularly relatable parts. To an outsider, it would look like they had been friends for years. And judging by their group leaders who reminisced with each other about their experiences as freshmen, that will probably remain true.

The program costs \$275 for backpacking trips and \$350 for the river trip. Financial assistance for students who want to participate in the Freshman Wilderness Experience is available through the Bryson Allen Wilderness Experience Fund.

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**Contact:** Elizabeth Fricke, director, UM Campus Recreation Outdoor Program, 406-243-5176, [Elizabeth.fricke@umontana.edu](mailto:Elizabeth.fricke@umontana.edu).###

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UM / News / Law Student Uses Fellowship to Advocate for Workplace Justice



SCHOOL OF LAW

# LAW STUDENT USES FELLOWSHIP TO ADVOCATE FOR WORKPLACE JUSTICE

03 SEPTEMBER 2021

*Third-year law student Noah Goldberg-Jaffe earned a prestigious Peggy Browning Fellowship.*



**MISSOULA** – Noah Goldberg-Jaffe grew up with a father as a teacher and spent his life watching his dad benefit from being a union member. Then when he was 26, Goldberg-Jaffe worked to organize unions for the Oregon American Federation of Labor Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). This summer, he walked picket lines, held strike signs and developed a deep and meaningful understanding of what it means to advocate for working people.

“It was an ‘ah-ha’ moment when I was going to work and making an impact on my community,” he said. “I realized that unions are a conduit for social change and improving the lives of working people.”

Now a third-year law student at the University of Montana, Goldberg-Jaffe spent 10 weeks this summer making a difference by advocating for workplace justice and fair labor practices after earning a prestigious Peggy Browning Fellowship.

The fellowship provides stipends to law students who dedicate their summer to advancing the cause of workers’ rights by working for labor unions, worker centers, labor-related not-for-profit organizations, union-side law firms and other nonprofit organizations.

Through these unique and challenging work experiences, Fellows gain practical skills while the host organizations and their clients benefit from the services they provide.

When Goldberg-Jaffe came to the Blewett School of Law, he applied to the Peggy Browning Fellowship and received the award for 2021.

“I always knew I wanted to do union law,” Goldberg-Jaffe said. “I’ve benefitted my whole life from unions and worker movements.”

The fellowship partnered Goldberg-Jaffe with his top-choice organization, Service Employees International Union. The union represents 2 million diverse members in health care, the public sector and property services and is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with local offices throughout the United States and Puerto Rico.

“I worked for the general counsel office doing a wide range of research and writing – classic legal intern clerk skills – but I did get to go to strike and learn what it’s like to practice law



outside the office, too,” Goldberg-Jaffe said.

He was involved in a strike in **Kalispell** by an SEIU union representing 650 nurses at Logan Health. The nurses walked off the job June 1 after more than a year of contract negotiations, as well as staffing and retention issues. He shadowed an SEIU attorney there to support the workers, held signs and walked the picket line alongside the nurses.

“That is how the summer started for me,” he said. “Technically, my work was based in D.C., but I was really excited to be able to connect that work in D.C. with people on the ground in Kalispell.”

He said when he started law school, Goldberg-Jaffe was unaware how complex labor law was, but that his eyes have been opened by his fellowship experience.

“I’ve learned that all types of law impact working people – constitutional law, civil rights –not necessarily just labor law,” Goldberg-Jaffe said. “This is what I came to law school for, and it was so validating. It was interesting and exciting to work with attorneys and other law students all over the country.

“As I’ve done the work, I’ve grown more passionate about it.”

After completing his final year of law school, Goldberg-Jaffe will clerk for the Honorable Donald W. Molloy of the U.S. District Court for the District of Montana in Missoula, then he hopes to launch a career in labor law.

For more information about the Peggy Browning Fellowship, visit

<https://www.peggybrowningfund.org/fellowships>. To find out more about the Blewett School of Law, go to <https://www.umt.edu/law/>.

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**Contact:** Andi Armstrong, Blewett School of Law director of marketing and communications, 406-243-6509, [andrea.armstrong@umontana.edu](mailto:andrea.armstrong@umontana.edu).

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UM / News / Griz Chat: UM to Welcome Renowned Adventure Writer and Author Peter Heller

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES

# GRIZ CHAT: UM TO WELCOME RENOWNED ADVENTURE WRITER AND AUTHOR PETER HELLER

02 SEPTEMBER 2021

*Author Peter Heller will visit UM and Missoula for a reading as a guest of the Visiting Writers Series, hosted by UM's Department of Creative Writing. Photo credit: John Burcham*

**MISSOULA** – National bestselling author Peter Heller has chased a whaling fleet, documented ecoterrorism, kayaked some of the world's most dangerous whitewater and reaped a long list of awards for his writing. Lauded as a premier voice of western literature, Heller will visit the University of Montana as part of UM's Visiting Writers Series, hosted by the **Department of Creative Writing** in UM's **College of Humanities & Sciences**.

Heller will read from his latest novel, "The Guide," published by Random House, from 7 to 9 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 7, at Fact and Fiction Books at 220 N. Higgins Ave. in downtown Missoula.

A finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize and winner of the prestigious Reading the West Book Award, Heller is the national best-selling author of "The River," "The Painter," "Celine" and "The Dog Stars," which has been published in 22 languages. He is also the author of four nonfiction books, including "Kook: What Surfing Taught Me About Love, Life and Catching the Perfect Wave," which was awarded the National Outdoor Book Award for Literature.

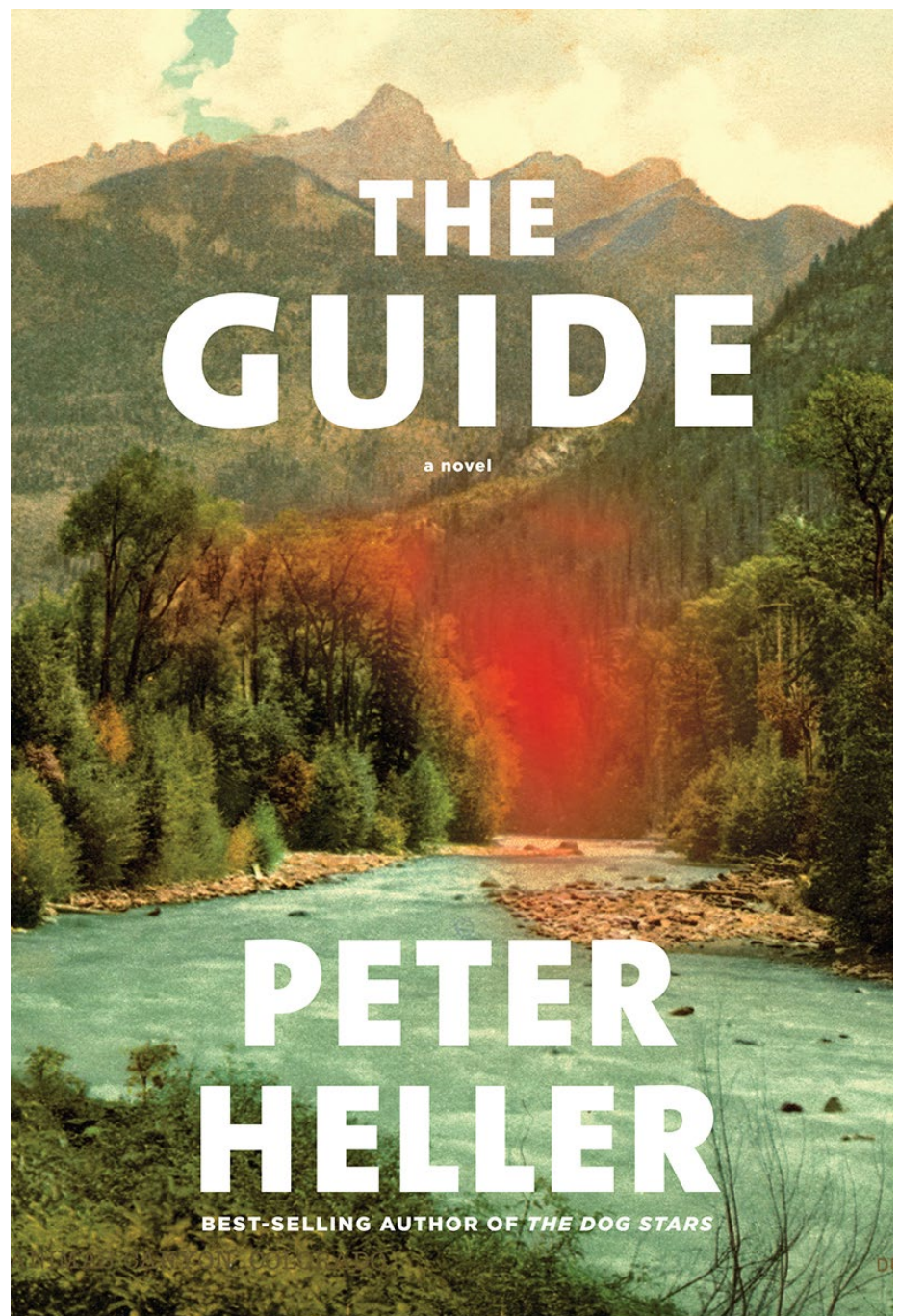
*Author Peter Heller will read from his new book "The Guide" at Fact and Fiction Books in downtown Missoula on Tuesday, Sept. 7.*

Heller holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from the Iowa Writers' Workshop in poetry and fiction and lives in Denver.

Ahead of his visit, Heller answered questions from UM News on writing, the West and the power of stories.

**We're living in a time where the West is facing multiple, layered challenges from drought, population migration, tourism,**





**affordability and wildfire (to name a few). How might these hard times influence western literature?**

**Heller:** Hard times. We're facing existential threats, and they can't help but influence all the arts. American literature is serving up some powerful responses, from the controversial migrant story "American Dirt" to Paolo Bacigalupi's "The Water Knife" about extreme drought.

**Your career impressively weaves together poetry, adventure and magazine writing and novels, and you have a long list of awards for works in each genre. Which do you like best?**

**Heller:** I came up as poet. My father was reading e.e. cummings poems to me when I was 6. Thank God I didn't understand them! Many were pretty bawdy, but I loved the music of the language and I wanted to do *that*. At 11 I read the slim book of stories "In Our Time" by



Hemingway, and the prose went through my skin straight to my heart, and after that I was set on writing fiction, too. When I got out of college, I had to make a living so I started writing for magazines — mostly expedition accounts — and I tried to use the stories as a training ground for fiction. I learned to create a vivid sense of place and evoke characters that felt alive and true. But when I returned to writing fiction it was like coming home. Once you start making it all up, it's hard to go back.

**Your book, “The Dog Stars,” places a post-apocalyptic fictional story set in Colorado at an airport hangar. Here we are, in the midst of global pandemic with plenty of societal and foreign strife and isolationism. How can stories reflect our shared worry and offer a thread of hope?**

**Heller:** The job of the novelist is maybe to grapple with the hardest things, the stuff we have the toughest time getting our arms around. “Job” is the wrong word, because a good novelist, an artist, will go wherever her heart leads her, and that's usually where the most energy is, where the stories live that are most troubling or exciting. I think a lot about mass extinction — the one we are causing — and so, of course, it informs my novels. And human beings have this way of redeeming themselves, so if there's hope in the stories, it's because we seem to be resilient and able, in the worst circumstances, to find a measure of grace.

**What's a healthy writing habit you might share?**

**Heller:** I write a thousand words a day, every day and always go just past the quota until I'm in the middle of a scene or a thought that's exciting. And then I make myself stop. I don't run on, I don't let myself. So, I'm always stopping in the middle, and then I can't wait to jump out of bed in the morning and keep going. It's a good way to generate a lot of momentum.

**You're an avid outdoorsman and expert kayaker — including tackling some of the world's most dangerous whitewater runs. How does exploring your own boundaries in nature translate to storytelling?**

**Heller:** I spent half my life running rivers. And when you're paddling a river that you don't know or that's never been described, you come around a tight bend and have no idea what will be there. It could be a waterfall or a cougar drinking or a flight of swallows. I loved that. I wanted that same thrill in my writing. So, I never outline or plot. Not in the beginning. I start with a first line whose music I love and let it rip. I put on a narrative current and follow it into new and strange territory, and in this way I can be as shocked and thrilled and surprised as the

reader. It's really fun.

**UM is a special place to study creative writing in the heart of the northern Rockies against the backdrop of western Montana, with access to some of the county's best backcountry and writing faculty. What advice might you share with our next-generation writers?**

**Heller:** Learn the plants and the birds. Notice the smells and changes in temperature as you splash cross a creek. Ground your writing in the senses and in the particular.

**Favorite book? What are you currently reading?**

**Heller:** Ha! That's like asking which one is your favorite kid. They change all the time. I just finished the Brazilian genius Machado de Assis's "Dom Casmurro." It was written in 1899 and feels terrifically modern. Satire, wry humor, compassion. I will read anything Murakami writes, and I recently read "Deacon King Kong" by James McBride and adored it.

**Many of your characters are expert fishermen and your latest book, "The River," centers around fishing and a canoe trip. You're here visiting Missoula and our legendary waters. Any plans to get out?**

**Heller:** There is no way on earth I would come up to Missoula and not bring a rod. I'll be fishing for a few days with the legendary guide Chris Dombrowski, who also happens to be a brilliant poet.

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**Contact:** Christopher Dombrowski, UM visiting professor, Department of Creative Writing,  
[Christopher.dombrowski@mso.umt.edu](mailto:Christopher.dombrowski@mso.umt.edu)

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UM / News / UM's Women's Entrepreneurship Program Receives Grant to Expand Online Classes

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

# UM'S WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM RECEIVES GRANT TO EXPAND ONLINE CLASSES

01 SEPTEMBER 2021



**MISSOULA** – The University of Montana's Women's Entrepreneurship and Leadership Lab launched this week with a grant from Wells Fargo to expand programs for women looking to start or grow their businesses.

The \$125,000 grant will allow **W.E.L.L.** to build awareness around inequities for women in business, highlight the ways men can support women and develop additional programming for budding entrepreneurs no matter where they live in the state, said Morgan Slemberger, director of the W.E.L.L. program.

"Wells Fargo was instrumental in supporting our foray into an online curriculum to support women across Montana," Slemberger said. "With their continued support, we've been able to expand from only offering one traditional college course to now creating five online courses geared toward women who want to start a business. Their shared commitment to empowering women set us up for our previous federal grant win for a U.S. Small Business Association Women's Business Center."

Formerly called Pursue your Passions, W.E.L.L. has grown from a campus-based student program to one with a broader reach.. In January, the SBA awarded UM and the Montana Technology Enterprise Center a competitive grant to open and run a **Women's Business Center** housed in Missoula with offices coming soon to **Great Falls** and **Fort Belknap**. It is the second WBC in the state, providing business counseling, programs and training to create financial independence for women who can help grow the state's economy.

Slemberger led efforts to secure the SBA grant and said this groundswell of support can go a long way toward helping women entrepreneurs. She said women in business traditionally face unique challenges to following their entrepreneurial spirit, including childcare and a finding a like-minded community.

"We have been practicing what we preach and starting up programs like our entrepreneurs start businesses; developing and testing ideas based on customer needs and growing them," Slemberger said, adding that participation in their programs has grown threefold in the past few years. "As word has spread that we're providing a safe place for women to share their ideas and grow their businesses, the more women, statewide – and even outside the state – we are able to support at whatever level makes sense to them."

Program participant Lindsey Godwin said she found the program at the perfect time in her



career as she was exiting one job and following her passion for photography.

“Surrounding myself with passionate, intelligent and strong women has made me feel confident in myself and what I’m capable of,” Godwin said. “Having a group of women to lean on, lift up and share successes with has empowered me to stop chasing my dreams and instead enabled me to capture them.”

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**Contact:** Morgan Slemberger, UM Accelerate Montana director of women’s entrepreneurship and leadership, 971-219-4101, [morgan.slemberger@mso.umt.edu](mailto:morgan.slemberger@mso.umt.edu).

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